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AUTHOR Grodman, Randy H.
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ABSTRACT

The Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT) is a private, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that operates a worldwide network of vocational education and technical assistance programs. ORT has provided training to more than 2 million people around the world. There are two facets of ORT: a network of educational institutions and technical assistance programs. Examples can be drawn from ORT's educational networks in the United States and Uruguay to examine how their institutions establish and maintain effective linkages with employers. Linkages include advisory committees, internship programs, alumni committees, and planning commissions. These linkages keep ORT aware of the specific needs of the economy in order to provide the training needed by workers; they are the key to the success of ORT's worldwide training efforts. (KC)

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ORT INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

WASHINGTON OFFICE: Suite 320, 2025 "I" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

(202) 293-2560
Cable: ORTECH
Telex: 6971740 (ORTECH WSH)

International Vocational Education and Training Association (IVETA)

Statement by Randy H. Grodman, ORT Washington, on the topic:

"Ways in Which Vocational Education and Training Institutions can Establish Effective Linkages With Employers"

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to IVETA, and in particular to Chairperson Jean Decker, for providing me with the opportunity to address this distinguished group. This has truly been an enlightening convention, and I have learned a great deal from the impressive speakers who have preceded me, on the subject under discussion and the other topics which have been examined.

My name is Randy Grodman and I coordinate the activities of the Washington D.C. office of ORT -- the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training. I believe that ORT is one of the most unique and exciting training organizations in the world. During the next 10-15 minutes, I will explain some key aspects of ORT, and also shed some light on how some of our educational

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LONDON OFFICE: ORT House-Sumpter Close, Finchley Road, London, NW3 5HR, England. Telephone: 01-431-1333. Cable: ORTADMIN. Telex: 8953281

GENEVA OFFICE: 3 rue de Varembe, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland. Telephone: (022) 34-14-34. Cable: ORTUNION. Telex: 27476 CH

NEW YORK OFFICE: 817 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003. Telephone: (212) 677-4400. Cable: AMORTFED. Telex: 66468

Joseph Harmatz, Director General
Simon Feldman, Director, International Cooperation

Donald H. Klein, Executive Vice-President
Paul Bernick, Consultant

institutions establish and maintain effective linkages with employers.

ORT was created in Europe in 1880. Skills training and apprenticeship programs were established in the agricultural, artisanal and industrial fields. Since its inception 109 years ago, ORT has been dedicated to developing the most valuable resources all of our countries possess - our human resources. ORT operates on the principle that mobilizing human resource capability and motivating people are key to progress in both developed and developing countries.

ORT is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization. Today, ORT operates a worldwide network of vocational education and technical assistance programs in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and North America. ORT has provided training to more than two million people around the world.

With world headquarters in London, we have a total staff of over 8,000, and operations in some 35 countries.

There are two distinct facets of ORT: (1) a network of educational institutions, run by our Pedagogical Department, and (2) technical assistance programs, which are administered by

ORT's International Cooperation Department. I would like to elaborate on these two parts of ORT.

The Pedagogical Department is responsible for our network of secondary and post-secondary institutions, such as technical institutes, junior colleges and teachers' institutes. We have many apprenticeship programs, and also offer adult upgrading and re-training courses.

Today, approximately 200,000 people are enrolled in these programs, in North and South America, Western Europe, Israel, India and Morocco. Many of our institutions were established more than 50 years ago. Others are new, such as the ORT Uruguay School of Management, inaugurated in Montevideo last year.

ORT schools provide training in over 100 job and professional skills; in management and supervision, in high technology subjects such as computer technology, robotics, and electronics, and in traditional vocational skills such as accounting, auto mechanics, carpentry, plumbing, tool-making, and hotel and restaurant trades. The training of trainers is of major importance, both in our schools (teacher training), and in our technical assistance programs.

This brings me to ORT's second area of activity - our worldwide technical assistance projects. Permit me to briefly summarize the nature of our involvement in international development projects. In 1960, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) requested ORT to determine the vocational training needs of eight newly independent countries in sub-Saharan Africa. ORT's leadership at the time decided the time was ripe to branch out from being a purely educational organization, and spread its experience and expertise to other parts of the world, including many less developed countries in which ORT was not operational at that time.

Since 1960, ORT's International Cooperation Department has completed more than 200 technical assistance projects in 56 countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. These programs are supported by multilateral and bilateral donor agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and USAID. Projects range from one-month evaluation missions to five-year programs involving teams of up to 25-30 ORT experts. Most of our technical assistance activities are in the fields of agriculture and rural development, transportation systems, urban development, industry and services, as well as in vocational and technical education.

Some examples of our diverse project experience include:

(1) A one-month survey of the largest vocational technical institutions in the Dominican Republic. Faculty training, curriculum development and equipment capabilities and needs were identified and analyzed.

(2) Long and short-term vocational training for road maintenance staff has been undertaken in several African and Latin American countries.

(3) Agricultural training centers have been designed, set up and run in a number of countries. For example, with Swiss Government funding, ORT is running five schools and two permanent training centers in Senegal, providing training to technicians in agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry.

Turning more specifically to the topic of this afternoon's session, I will draw upon certain aspects of ORT's educational networks in two countries -- the United States and Uruguay -- to examine how our institutions establish and maintain effective linkages with employers.

Most of the students in ORT's U.S. program are enrolled at our schools in New York City and Los Angeles. In addition to offering one and two-year certificate and diploma programs, there are three-month, six-month and nine-month programs which are carefully tailored to specific, current needs of industry.

Subjects taught include: electronic technology, computer programming, computer-aided design (CAD), word processing, accounting, business management, and secretarial studies.

The establishment of Advisory Committees is one of the most important ways in which our schools ensure that curricula are designed based on the actual needs of industry. These committees are composed of 12-15 members, including three staff members of the ORT school -- the Director, the Technical Director, and the Curriculum Director. It may be instructive to cite examples of the types of individuals on ORT's Los Angeles and New York Advisory Committees:

- Recruitment managers from major banks, computer companies and electronics/communications firms;
- local Department of Education officials, especially members of "Occupational Preparation" divisions;
- senior staff of other technical institutes, community colleges and universities;
- hospital administrators; and
- Small Business Administration (SBA) officials.

The committees meet two or three times each year, in order to evaluate current and projected changes in types of skills required by employers, as well as fluctuations in the job market (i.e., where new employment opportunities exist and in which

areas there is no longer a demand for certain skills). The committees then focus on how to adapt curricula, equipment and faculty training to the new realities.

Another key element of our schools' programs is internship programs, referred to as "stages" in many countries. Students are placed in organizations of their choice, where they work for three to six months on a part-time or full-time basis. The students receive credits toward their degrees, while also gaining exposure to work environments -- in other words, practical on-the-job training. Moreover, upon completion of their ORT training, they are often offered permanent employment in the places they served as interns. Internships are beneficial to the employers for two reasons: (1) they are provided with inexpensive, yet highly-motivated and skilled workers; and (2) ORT graduates with this practical work experience are known to the employers, and are often subsequently hired because they are less of a "risk."

Last year, the Los Angeles ORT Technical Institute (LAOTI) was one of only 35 schools granted accreditation without stipulations by the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS). This is indeed recognition of an ORT success when one considers that 387 schools were reviewed by the NATTS Accrediting Commission during its 1988-89 meetings.

I would like to spend a few minutes discussing ORT Uruguay, which is presently the largest non-governmental technological teaching institution in that country. The three major components of our Uruguay program are:

(1) A technical institute for students over 15 years of age, which offers one-year and two-year courses in subjects such as computer operations and programming, electrical trades skills, and secretarial studies.

(2) A three-year university level program offering the equivalent of an American Bachelor of Science degree in four areas: management, electronics, communications technology and systems analysis.

(3) Short, evening courses (less than six months duration) geared toward upgrading and re-training in word processing, computer-assisted design (CAD), and Lotus. Examples of who enrolls in these courses include bank tellers who want to learn more about computers in order to obtain more senior positions, and architects interested in benefiting from the latest advances in computer-assisted design. In addition, refresher courses in finance, economics, marketing and computers are offered to professionals who manage their own businesses (lawyers, accountants, etc.), and who will increase their competitiveness through such specialized training.

A brief commercial plug for ORT Uruguay is in order! In April 1990, ORT Uruguay will begin offering two-year, part-time master's degree programs -- one in business administration (MBA equivalent), and one in Management Information Systems (MIS). These will be the first masters level degrees ever available in Uruguay in these two subject areas.

Not only are internships available in ORT Uruguay, they are compulsory for students in their final year of university level management studies. (Those studying computers can elect to undertake internships on a voluntary basis.) After completing three years of courses, interns spend four to six months working within government agencies, banks, accounting firms or other corporations.

Presently, most interns placed by ORT Uruguay work in one of two capacities:

(1) as junior assistants to senior managers, in order to expose them to the realities of managerial responsibility; and

(2) as junior assistants involved in special projects, especially in the launching of new products.

As is the case with interns in ORT's U.S. schools, the interns in Uruguay benefit from relevant, hands-on training, and positive exposure to prospective employers. They also receive

remuneration (minimum monthly wage or higher), which helps them defray living expenses. The employers benefit from inexpensive and flexible manpower, and the internships serve as a convenient personnel trial and evaluation procedure.

ORT Uruguay has set up two different types of committees which warrant mention here -- Advisory Committees and Alumni Committees.

There is one Advisory Committee for each academic area (i.e., computer science, electronics, management), composed of 12-15 leading industrialists and senior civil servants. (One out of every three workers in Uruguay is a public employee.) The committees meet twice each year with ORT's directors to discuss the current, short-term and long-term needs of employers in the public and private sectors. As a result of the committees' activities, ORT regularly introduces new courses which are adapted to the relevant demands of industry and government. In general, one or two new courses are introduced each year; due to the rapid pace of technology advancement, the average life cycle for ORT Uruguay's courses is four to five years. Advisory Committees have an added benefit to ORT in that our reputation is enhanced when leading industrialists recognized and spread the word that ORT listens to industry, and responds quickly and effectively.

The second type of committees are Alumni Committees, which have been established for ORT Uruguay's university level programs. Every six months, ORT directors meet with a representative group of recent ORT graduates to receive feedback on how their training has helped them compete in the labor market. The graduates relate their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the ORT training, and any valuable suggestions are incorporated into the program.

The last point I should like to share with you pertains to the establishment of Planning Commissions. In a number of countries where ORT has provided training, we have set up commissions consisting of representatives of employers, unions, government agencies and training institutions. The commissions offer an opportunity for dialogue among these groups concerning existing and future manpower needs. Specific training programs can then be developed based upon precise skill requirements.

In conclusion, I believe that there are five important points to consider on the subject I addressed today:

First, vocational education and training institutions must be aware of the specific needs of the economy in order to effectively orient the type and level of training offered to

students. The institutions can thereby ensure that their educational standards, tools and techniques all conform with the manpower requirements of employers. Institutions should also demonstrate flexibility, and whenever appropriate integrate new subjects and courses, as well as innovative teaching techniques, into the curriculum.

Second, it is often useful for educational organizations to establish Alumni Committees. These committees provide a means of eliciting important information and suggestions from former students who have gained valuable job market experience.

Third, Advisory Committees are an effective tool to form a bridge between employers and vocational training institutions.

Fourth, the formation of a larger group, which I referred to as a Planning Commission, can provide for constructive dialogue among representatives of public and private sector employers, unions and educational organizations.

Finally, carefully structured internship programs serve as a powerful mechanism to link graduates of vocational training institutions with prospective employers. Such programs have the added benefit of providing information to training organizations regarding the essential needs of employers.

One last commercial for ORT before I conclude! If you have not already had an opportunity to visit our exhibition booth at the AVA Convention, I strongly suggest that you do so. The Director of ORT's Technical Department, Joshua Idar, as well as our Director of Research and Development, Yehuda Ben-Shlomo, are here from our world headquarters in London. They would be pleased to talk with you about our educational technology and programs.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.